

Representative Donald Jones – Chair

Education and local Government Interim Committee

PO Box 2011706

Helena, Montana 59620-1706

Re: Public written comments for the continuing support of the Education and Local Government Interim Committee SJR-21 study of Local Fire and Emergency Services and draft bill language.

Dear representative Jones:

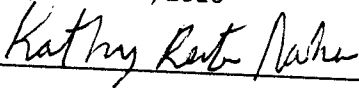
The cooperative equipment agreement between Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forestry Division (DNRC) and participating, respective counties of Montana, at paragraph 10, states that all signatory counties must ensure that all drivers and passengers working on the subject equipment must be insured by workmen's compensation insurance.

SJR – 21 ensures that those fire departments that are called to use such equipment are, in fact, covered by workmen's compensation in order to protect the volunteer fire fighters in the event of a work related accident and to pay into the workers compensation pool as all other fire fighting resources must do.

SJR – 21 ensures that the DNRC will review the cooperative plan each year and inspect the loaned equipment including the requirement that such cooperator is in fact insured by workmen's compensation.

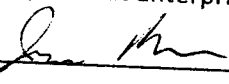
My wife and I are private contractors of wildland engines in Montana. We have eight engines together and we employ 24, first string employees, and about 8 second string employees. We must comply with expensive worker's compensation coverage for our employees yet we also realize that it is a smart requirement because of the risky nature of our work. We expect that Montana's volunteer fire departments comply with those same requirements when acting in the capacity of hired equipment by the DNRC on wildland fires, for the same reasons and that they should also participate in stringent inspections to ensure compliance, each year, as we do. We support SJR – 21 and we urge you to do the same. Such compliance is fair and prudent.

Dated: September 7, 2016



Kathy Reiter-Maher

Owner/Polekat Enterprises LLC.



James Maher

Owner/ Peanut Pie Enterprises LLC.